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An
Inaugural Dissertation

on
Emetic Medicines

by
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of
Virginia.

admitted March 10th 1819

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Of Emetic Medicines.

Teachers of the Materia Medica, in establishing the Class of Medicines called Emetics, have defined them such as excite vomiting independant of the effect arising from the mere quantity of matter introduced into the Stomach. Daily experience teaches us that all bitter, and nauseating drugs have the power to induce vomiting, when administered in large doses or when the stomach is in an irritable state. It cannot therefore be deemed useless to reduce the limits of this class of Medicines to a smaller sphere, and include such only in it, as induce vomiting when administered in the smallest doses, in any state of the stomach, and whose effects are the most uniform and certain.

Previous to the existence of the Roman Empire, little knowledge appears to have been attained in the healing art. Nor was it much cherished, even there or in the neighbouring countries, until the Romans by their adroitness in warfare had subdued most of the surrounding nations; when luxury and indolence paved the way to a train of diseases. It was then that medicines of this class presented them-

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selves, and promised to become efficacious in the treatment of diseases. Nor is it among the civilized nations alone, that these remedies are used, but the most savage tribes, and even the brute creation, as though by instinct, have recourse, to these the most valuable of Medicines when in a diseased state. Notwithstanding the many proofs that were adduced of the efficacy of Emetics, some of the ancient Physicians obstinately objected to their use, as an unnatural, and dangerous remedy. Of the fearlness of such an objection I deem it unnecessary to say anything; but shall only refer, those doubting the propriety of such a practice; to one that has been pursued for a series of ages, attended by every advantage that could serve to recommend it to the Medical World.

To use the words of an highly approved author. "The general theory of vomiting appears sufficiently evident." He says; "That the peristaltic motion of the Stomach, by which the food is propelled through the pylorus, is inverted, the diaphragm, and abdominal Muscles are called into action by a fociation, and the contents of the stomach forcibly driven

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upwards." That such an action as is here spoken of must take place there cannot be a doubt; but we are left without any reason why such an action does take place. May we not here inculcate the opinion of Darwin, and say; that the inversion of the stomach, which takes place in the act of vomiting is caused by the loss of a pleasureable sensation, which is requisite to a proper action of that organ. But to say the most of this, it appears to be a subject concealed in the Mysteries of nature, which will ever afford a theme for ingenious and speculative theorists; and one which involves no one point of practical importance.

An opinion has long since been cherished and ably advocated by Professor Chapman in his lectures; that in diseases generally, the first cause exists in the stomach. And may it be asked in what way can the stomach be more readily evacuated of its acrid, irritated and oppressive contents, than by the administration of an Emetic. The answer must be there is none better. It is in this way, therefore that we are to strike at the root of a disease by expelling from the stomach, the offending cause, or by subverting the nascent

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It is by Emetics, that we are enabled to clear the biliary ducts of a redundancy of bile. During the operation of an Emetic, the diaphragm and abdominal Muscles (as has been already observed) are called into action; which by their pressure, propel the bile from its bladder, into the duodenum, and from thence into the stomach, by which means it finds a ready passage out of the body. By some it is maintained that the bile, thus thrown out existed in the stomach previous to the ~~administration of the~~ administration of the Medicine. Such may be the case sometimes; but that, this as a general rule, will not hold good must appear from this, that were it the case, in the first attempts to vomit, the bile would be thrown out more profusely, than in any succeeding paroxism, which daily experience teaches us, is not the case.

As respects the power vested in the stomach, to discharge from itself any offensive matter, independent of the diaphragm and abdominal Muscles, much difference of sentiment prevails among physiologists.

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A peculiar virtue, which Emetics possess over other Medicines, appears to be this, that by the frequent administration of them, so far from the Stomach's becoming habituated to their stimulus, that it becomes more irritable at each successive time of administration, until the mere sight of the Medicine or even conversation relative to it will excite vomiting. When an Emetic is given the first indication of its action is an uneasy sensation, attended with a pale countenance, and a feeble, quick, and irregular pulse, but so soon as the vomiting is induced, the face becomes flushed, the circulation becomes more vigorous though comparatively weak, and there is a glow on the surface. The operation having ceased, the system is left languid, and there is a disposition to sleep, which is interrupted by slight occasional sickness. The skin is cool and moist with more or less perspiration, and the pulse which continues weak is slower and fuller.

Before we proceed to administer Emetics, there are several rules, that demand particular attention.

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determination of blood to the head, we are to resort to venesection, previous to the administration of the medicine, by which precaution many are snatched from the dangers arising from an Apoplexy or Hemoptysis.

2nd " When the necessity is urgent, and a certain and powerful operation is demanded give a large dose of the most active species.

3rd " In ordinary cases administer the medicine in divided quantities so as to guard against too violent an effect.

4th " When the object is to make a strong impression on the system little drink should be allowed. But if the design is to cleanse the stomach, large draughts of tepid water, or some other light drink, such as Chamomile tea will promote this end, and at the same time facilitate the vomiting.

5th " As a general rule, Emetics should always be given on an empty stomach, and in the morning. They act with greater certainty, and less distress to the patient. They may however be administered in the evening.

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of Emetic Medicine, direct Laudanum combined with some cordial; apply fomentations to the pit of the Stomach. Chicken water or Water Gruel copiously drank, is useful by turning the Medicine down. When these fail which will rarely be the case, Anodyne injections may be resorted to.

Having concluded this part of the subject, it is necessary in the next place to point out such Medicines as belong to the class of Emetics. These are obtained from the Vegetable and Mineral Kingdoms; and first I shall speak of Mineral Emetics. When contemplating this list, there is none which has stronger claims to our attention than the preparations of Antimony. A detail of the History of this Metal would be useless. Like most other active medicines, the preparations of this Metal, passed a fiery ordeal before it was admitted into general and extensive practice. Antimony is nearly inert in its natural state, it however, by its multiplied combinations, supplies us with a profusion of active remedies, one of which, only, will be noticed in this place. Of the many preparations of this Metal; the Tartarised Antimony familiarly called Tartar Emetic, is that which is almost uni-

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versally prefered in practice. As an Emetic the Tartarized Antimony is distinguished, by the certainty, extent and permanency of its operation; besides this it possesses other qualities which no less entitle it to the high standing, it claims in the Materia Medica. One of the difficulties, which a practitioner has to surmount in his Medical pursuits, is the proper administration of his remedies, especially in the cases of Children. This Medicine being nearly insipid, inodorous, without colour and so very minute in the dose, that it may be given with great facility in cases where it would be impossible to administer any other medicine. The dose of this article is from two to five grains, for an adult when we wish to puke effectually, and its operation is to be promoted by the free use of tepid water. The best mode of administering this preparation of Antimony in the cases of children, is in the form of Antimonial Wine or Tartar Emetic dissolved in Wine. In preparing this Medicine great care is requisite, lest there be an over portion of the Tartar. According to the Edinburg Dispensatory, there are two grains of Emetic Tartar, to an ounce of Wine. Agreeably to the London four grains. When agreeably to the former the dose for an

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adult, is an Ounce, and for a child that has attained the age of six months, ten or fifteen drops may be given at short intervals, until the desired effect is produced. The proportion may be increased or diminished as circumstances or age may require. The London Preparation to be given in half the quantity of the Edinburg.

The Sulphate of Zinc is a powerful Emetic, when administered in a dose of ten or twenty grains. It is preferable to all others, when Narcotic poisons have been taken into the stomach.

The list of Mineral Emetics may be concluded by the addition of one more which appears to possess some claims to our attention (viz) Blue Vitriol or Sulphate of copper. This appears to possess no advantage over those already mentioned. It excites vomiting readily & that without much nausea. This should be rarely used, due to the danger and great pain, that attend its operation, the dose should not at any time exceed one or two grains.

We are now to turn our attention to the vegetable world, and collect from thence articles, whose virtues as Emetics, have ever been acknowledged. The first that demands our attention is Ipecacuanha. The only part of this plant that is used, is the

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root. There are several kinds of Ipecacuanha. The ash coloured is to be preferred. It is derived from Peru. The Peruvian Ipecacuanha comes in small wrinkled pieces externally brown, and internally of a white colour. It has a faint smell and bitter taste. The dose of Ipecacuanha is from ten to thirty grains; much larger doses have been given with no other than the desired effect. Ipecacuanha is the mildest of the Emetics, which are at the same time certain in their operation. It evacuates the contents of the Stomach, without exciting violent vomiting, and is therefore suited to a great number of cases.

Next to Ipecacuanha, I shall speak of an Indigenous Emetic, which has very justly acquired great celebrity amongst us. It is generally known by the name of Indian Physic, and is found in great profusion in all parts of the United States. The manner in which it is prepared for use, is to make a strong decoction of its roots; the bark of which appears to possess all the medical qualities; of this decoction take ℥ IV, and repeat at short intervals until the desired effect is produced. No fear is to be entertained, with respect to any danger that may accrue from the use of Indian Physic.

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I have known it to be used frequently, unattended with griping or any other disagreeable affection. I do not know that this Medicine should be prefered to Ipecacuanha; it is only valuable when the Ipecac cannot be procured. I have never known this medicine used in substance.

The next I shall notice, is the Nicotiana or Tobacco; which certainly exceeds all others for the promptness, violence and permanincy of its impression. Of the history of this plant nothing need be said. It is cultivated in all parts of the United States, and is produced in the greatest abundance. Although it is a dangerous remedy when taken internally, nevertheless it produces the most salutary effects, when used externally in the form of a cataplasm; it is likewise used in the form of glyster in extreme cases.

The last medicine I shall consider as belonging to the class of Emetics, is the Scilla Maratima of which little will be said, as there are others vastly superior to it; and is only to be accognised as an Emetic when no other can be procured.

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Of the Diseases in which Emetics are to be used.

In turning over the pages of Medical Writers, there is nothing which more frequently arrests our attention, as bearing a conspicuous part in the cure of diseases, than that of Emetics. They are peculiarly adapted to the cure of diseases in all countries; but more particularly to those, in climates, where there is a frequent, sudden and considerable change of temperature. I shall only enumerate the most prominent cases in which Emetics are to be employed.

In treating every species of fever, the superiority, that Emetics possess over all other medicines, when exhibited in the first stage of the disease, cannot be denied. In this stage, they are productive of the greatest benefits, as they cleanse the stomach of all its morbific contents. "Let the cause of fever be what it may, from every attendant symptom I am induced to believe," says professor Chapman "that the primary link of its lengthened, and complex chain, is in the stomach. It is on this organ that contagious, Marsh effluvia, and other noxious matters act, and hence precisely as in the case of poison, a local irritation at first occurs, which if not at once arrested, speedily spreads

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itself by multiplying the trains of morbific association, till the disease becomes general, involving more or less the animal Economy. Either therefore to expel the offending cause from the stomach, or to subvert the nascent impression, which it creates, before it becomes invigorated, diffused or fixed in the Stomach, an Emetic is obviously the remedy for the purpose. The Emetic to be preferred here, is the Tartrate of Antimony; which is supposed by Fordyce to possess a specific power, independent of its Emetic or Nauseating qualities in the cure of fevers; this opinion is corroborated by the authority of professor Chapman. Cullen maintains, that without vomiting or nausea, in no case whatever, is the least benefit derived from its use; this appears plausible when we consider the intimate sympathy that exists between the stomach and skin; and the spasmodic constriction of the extreme vessels, by which fever is perpetuated; it would appear that such an action is requisite to excite the stomach, by which the constriction of the extreme vessels will be subdued, and an end be put to the hot stage of fever. But we are well aware, that there are other articles, possessed of more nauseating qualities, that Tartar Emetic (such as Tobacco,

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Squills, and Digitalis) yet they are not so efficacious in the treatment of fevers, which leaves us almost without a doubt of its specific action. But far be it from me to question the authority of Cullen or Fordyce, on this subject, when men enjoying the highest honours, the medical profession can bestow, are "halting between the two opinions".

The next disease that I shall mention is Cynanche Trachealis. In the treatment of this disease no one disputes the indispensible necessity of puking actively, in the commencement of an attack. For this purpose, the Antimoniae Wine is generally preferred; we should not hesitate to give to a child six months old, a tea-spoon full of this article every fifteen minutes until the desired effect is produced. Croup is one of those diseases, in which physicians have frequently to encounter great difficulties, in getting their remedies to operate. When an Emetic does not operate, in a short time after its administration, we must resort to the use of the Warm bath; and should this fail Venesection in extreme cases even ad deliquium animi, is to be used.

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acquaintance of mine in the Month of May last, in which he assured me, that he had used in the course of twelve hours, in small and repeated doses, Tart: Emet: to the amount of six grains, together with the warm bath and venesection; and notwithstanding every effort on his part the child (which was not above twelve months old) fell a victim to the disease, without the slightest effort to vomit. But in cases generally by steadily persisting in the use of these remedies, we seldom fail to produce the desired effect. Should there be a relapse of the disease, Emetics will prove no less efficacious in the second than in the first attack.

Of the diseases which are embraced in the class of Neuroses or Nervous affections: It is an opinion entertained by Professor Chapman, "that it is highly probable that every one of the series has its origin very often in the alimentary canal, and sometimes in the Stomach itself; and can only be successfully treated by our keeping this fact steadily before us" He continues "after this declaration it is hardly necessary for me to mention, that I consider Emetics as among the most valuable of our means in the management of these cases.

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"Of the cases of Neuroses, however, the one which appears to me, sometimes, to be the most universally a gastric affection, is Epilepsy. Entertaining this impression of the nature of the disease; I have freely prescribed Emetics in it, and with manifest advantage." The efficacy of this practice is well exemplified in a case of an intimate acquaintance and friend of mine, who had been afflicted, with this disease for many years, and being desirous to be acquainted with its nature, he determined to study medicine. During the sessions he attended lectures in Philadelphia, he placed himself under the care and direction of Professor Chapman, by whose skill in Medicine and kind attention has has been happily relieved from a relapse of this most formidable of diseases for more than two years. Persons who are subject to this disease, are often made sensible of an approaching attack, at which time an Emetic should be exhibited, by which means the accession of a paroxism is often prevented, and if not altogether resisted; it is rendered milder and of shorter duration. Emetic medicines have obtained great celebrity in the treatment of Hemorrhagy. Many years ago Emetics were stren-

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uously recommended in Hemoptysis by Dr. Robinson of Dublin. But the practice was not much followed, having been tried by Cullen in particular, and abandoned on account of its temerity. Professor Chapman, adduces a case where he witnessed the worst hemorrhagy of the kind that ever came under his notice, completely suspended by a dose of Digitalis, which purged violently. Notwithstanding this proved salutary in this case, yet in many others it might have proved fatal; and no one can but agree with those writers who hold the practice to be a dangerous one.
In the treatment of Uterine Hemorrhage much can be said of this class of Medicine and particularly of Ipecacuanha. It is remarked by several authors, that in some cases, the moment the nausea is induced, the flooding ceases. By what precise mode of action, it causes such an effect, is a point on which there is no unanimity of sentiment. Some have alleged it, to be the astringency of the Medicine; others to the antispasmodic quality it possesses; and others, more probably, suppose it to operate simply by inducing relaxation and debility, thereby diminishing

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arterial action, which so uniformly has a tendency to suppress effusions of Blood. The best mode of administering Ipecacuanha in cases of Uterine Hemorhage, is to combine two grains of it with ½ gr: of Opium, and give this dose every two or three hours as may seem necessary. Next to Uterine Hemorhage, I shall speak of Tic Doloreux. This most painful, and hitherto intractable disease, which has so long domineered over the skill of the Medical World, has at last yielded its poignancy to the unparalleled skill of Professor Physick. After having used almost every medicine, with which the Materia Medica is replete without success; Emetics proved to be a specific in his hands. A lady in Virginia hearing with what success Professor Physick, had used this remedy, she resolved to try it. She had been afflicted in this way for many years. By an ~~of~~ Emetic considerable relief was obtained; but its operation was violent and attended with a great deal of pain. The affection relapsed in eight or ten days, but she could not be prevailed upon to repeat the Medicine; the consequence of which has been a constant pain in the pain.

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In Mania, Emetics have been highly extolled, and examples are not wanting, in which their efficacy is evident. It is almost unnecessary to remark, that in cases, in which there is considerable arterial action, with high excitement of the Brain, that the use of Emetics, is injudicious. Doctor Calhoon, in a lecture to the class attending the Hospital Practice, in the Month of October last; mentioned that patients coming there labouring under Mania, with a small and weak pulse, and disposed to Melancholy; had been successfully treated by Emetics.

When poisons have been taken into the stomach, it is to Emetics, we have reference, as our only hope of snatching our patient, from the inevitable pangs of death. The Medicine justly celebrated in these cases, is the Sulphate of Zinc, in doses of thirty, forty or even sixty grains in extreme cases. Should the Stomach lose its susceptibility, for the operation of this medicine, cataplasms of moist tobacco leaves applied to the region of the stomach, will often produce the most salutary effect. This has succeeded when, all attempts, to induce vomiting by internal remedies, have failed.

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Nor are these the only cases, in which the efficacy of this application is known. The Surgeon, when almost overcome by fatigue, and exhausted through anxiety for his patient, labouring under incarcerated Hernia, by the appropriate use of this remedy; is made the happy instrument, whereby the life of the miserable sufferer is redeemed; and he becomes a living monument of the efficacy of this article, in extreme cases.

There are also many other affections, such as Dropsy, Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Apoplexy, Asthma, Pertussis, Puerperal fever not to mention many more, in the treatment of which Emetic Medicines hold a conspicuous part. To say the least of this class of medicines, it is one, by which we are often enabled to triumph over diseases, which carry with them terror and desolation; and may we not flatter ourselves that ere long, by assiduity and attention, we may be enabled to erase, many, which now crowd the opprobrious list of incurable diseases.